July 7th Nationwide Day of Clergy Action to Protect Our Vote

Multi-Faith Clergy Press Action Planning Toolkit

The Mission: **On Tuesday, July 7th, immediately following the 250th anniversary of our founding and 4 months to the day before the election, we are leading a national clergy day of action to "Protect Our Vote". We are inviting you to co-lead a multifaith clergy press conference in your state/ region on Tuesday, July 7th to stand up for democracy in three ways:**

1) **Draw attention to the threats to free and fair elections this year to help election officials and the broader public prepare for them**
2) **Share our collective commitment as multifaith clergy to protect voting rights this year**
    a) We hope to be able to go public with hundreds of clergy signatures from your state on our clergy sign-on letter decrying threats to free and fair elections this year. We hope you will widely circulate this sign-on letter (https://bit.ly/FaithInUsLetter26) throughout your clergy networks to gather as many signatures as possible by July 7!
    b) Powerful clergy press conferences will have at least 50-100 clergy present across race, faith and geography and at least 250-300 clergy from your state signed on to you clergy sign-on letter.
3) **Insist that our local, state and federal officials publicly pledge to protect free and fair elections this year with us.**
    a) Use the presser to launch a public call for all of your state's local and state elections officials to commit to our "Pledge to Protect Our Freedom to Vote" as we launch an organizing path towards local actions at city councils or county boards (depending on election administration) to urge them to commit to the pledge and to partner to protect free and fair elections this year!

Faith in Us “Protect Our Vote” Press Action Toolkit
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Pledge for Elected Officials to Protect Our Freedom to Vote

We are calling on all our local, state and federal elected officials, especially those who help administer our elections and certify the results, to sign our public pledge and commit to the following:

1) Abide by the US Constitution and state election laws
2) Refuse to comply with any unlawful Executive Orders or data requests from the Department of Justice that seek to restrict voting
3) Pledge to faithfully play your role to certify and/or seat the rightfully elected winners of elections this November, regardless of their party affiliation.

Clergy Sign-On Letter Language (https://bit.ly/FaithInUsLetter26)

National - Faith Leaders Sign On Letter to Urge Election Officials to Protect our Freedom To Vote

As faith leaders, we stand for justice and fairness. We believe in protecting the dignity and rights of all people. We work to bring people together across every divide and we know that our democracy is strong when everyone is treated with dignity and when all voices are heard. As we approach the 2026 November elections, our freedom to vote and elect the leaders we choose is under threat. As clergy across faith, race and geography, we are joining together to protect our voting rights and the voting rights of our neighbors.

We are speaking out against decisions that limit the access eligible voters have to the ballot box and efforts that appear aimed at preventing eligible voters from voting. We are deeply concerned about the executive order severely restricting vote-by-mail, and we are outraged by the rapid gerrymandering of racially discriminatory election maps in many states following the Supreme Court's decision to end the Voting Rights Act commitment to racial equality in elections.

Vote-by-mail is particularly important for elders in our communities, for those with mobility concerns, for those in rural areas, and for those whose job status or life circumstances makes it difficult to vote in person on election day. In some states, all eligible voters are sent a mail ballot. This executive order threatens to take the vote away from countless eligible voters in our communities, causing confusion and chaos and the denial of fundamental constitutional rights. Vote-by-mail has been proven to be accurate, reliable, and efficient across the country, and it helps ensure that we are able to exercise our constitutional right to vote.

Our faith traditions affirm the dignity, worth, and agency of all people. Patterns of action that prevent eligible voters from voting and that dilute voter's power to choose their elected leaders violate our faith traditions' affirmation of human dignity. Complicated registration rules, fewer voting options, threats to deploy ICE to polling places, requests that states turn over voter rolls despite privacy and security concerns, and discriminatory gerrymandering of maps all offend our core faith values as well as core democracy values. These efforts limit access to the ballot box and intimidate eligible voters, especially eligible voters of color. This makes us less free and gives us less power as voters to choose our leaders.

We call on our Secretaries of State, election administrators and all elected officials in our states to join us in publicly opposing these efforts. We call on elected officials to join us in protecting our elections, our democracy, and the ability of all eligible voters to be able to access the ballot box and vote.

We are coming together to protect our voting rights and the voting rights of our neighbors. We will continue to oppose attacks on the freedom to vote. We call on our elected leaders to do the same.

Signed,

How to Set Up Your Press Conference:

1. **Choose 1-2 Clergy to Be "Anchor Leaders" of your press action. These leaders will coordinate with Faith in Us staff, check-in with the team on turnout and clergy signature collection, work with their team to ensure that powerful speakers are recruited and prepared, and that the media advisory and press advisory get done**

2. **ASAP: Land your location (ASAP):** Suggestions – visible public spaces – State Capitol Steps, Secretary of State Building, County or City Election Administration Building. These public buildings will have policies for press conferences and often will have reservation systems/and or people to call to make a reservation on their website.

3. **ASAP: Ask to make a reservation for Tuesday July 7th at 10:00am.** Gather clergy to prep from 10:00 – 10:20am. Press Conference runs will be from 10:30am – 11:00am. Debrief runs from 11:10 – 11:30am. Press are able to get stories out by noon on radio and tv and get stories on afternoon and evening radio and tv.

4. **ASAP: Land your clergy turnout! Widely and intentionally invite your clergy colleagues to attend** and sign on and share the clergy sign-on letter (https://bit.ly/FaithInUsLetter26)! Every clergy co-leading this path should plan to make at least ten personal invitations (phone calls or in-person conversations). You should aim for at least 50-100 clergy across faith, denomination, race and geography in your visual.

5. **ASAP: Widely share the clergy sign-on letter (https://bit.ly/FaithInUsLetter26) with all of your clergy social media networks, email lists, denominational networks, etc, and encourage them to share it with their colleagues.** In your personal turnout conversations, also as your colleagues to share the clergy sign-on letter with their networks and help them brainstorm where they could share it! It will take intentional organizing to get to 250-300 clergy per state on your list!

6. **Ideally by July 2: Recruit Your Press Conference Speaker Lineup:** Speakers should be the most powerful clergy you can recruit to speak: those who are aligned with you around protecting to vote who have a powerful following/ base (who can publicly show they have people behind them). Imams/Rabbis/Pastors with a prominent and large faith community, judicatory leaders, etc. Your speaker lineup should represent broad support across your state or region: across faith, race, urban/ suburban/rural, etc.

7. **By Thursday, July 2 or Friday July 3 AND July 7th between 6-8am local time: Send out a Press Advisory –** The Press Advisory informs press that you are holding a press conference, answers the questions of what, who, when, and why, and invites them to attend. *A sample press advisory is below.* We can help you identify relevant local outlets. We recommend sending advisories at least twice: 1) 2-3 days before the press conference and 2) the morning of the press conference (between 6am - 8am local time).

Contact Trevor Cochlin at tcochlin@isaiahmn.org or Liam McMahon liam@faithinusleading.org for help with your advisory.

8. **On July 7: Bring Audio Equipment**. By organizing a press conference we are hosting members of the press and tv crews. Bring equipment that press can use to hold their microphones, such as a podium, or a mic stand with multi-mic holder (like this). The better we make accommodations for the press (alongside planning strategic times and moments), the more likely they are to come back to our future press actions.

9. **On Monday, July 6 and the morning of Tuesday, July 7: Follow up Advisory with calls to any reporters with whom you have personal relationships –** Phone calls to reporters with whom someone on your team has a relationship go a long way to getting reporters to commit to attending your event

10. **On July 7: Make Speakers Available to the Press for Interviews immediately before or after the press conference**

11. **Before July 7: Plan to Arrange Visuals -** If a reporter took a picture of your press conference, would someone be able to understand the basic message just from an image? Consider making signs with text that people without speaking roles can hold: “Protect Our Vote”, “Let My People Vote”, “Elections Free of Federal Interference”

12. **July 7: Have someone record a Video or livestream the Press Conference:** Recording or livestreaming a video to social media is a helpful way to be able to share content of the press conference after the fact. Getting good audio is key, so delegate this task to a tech-savvy person in your group.

13. **On July 7: Issue a press release following your press conference -** Not every reporter who may be interested in covering your action will be able to be present. Send a press release shortly after your press conference to the same group that received your advisory to summarize the event. Include pithy quotes from each speaker. If you recorded a video of the press conference somewhere, share a link to that. If speakers are willing, state that speakers are available to speak to members of the press upon request. *A press release template is provided below.*

Press Conference Speaker Roles Overview

1) **Chair: Should be an experienced public speaker from largest faith community in your region and representing a large institution**
    a) Opens the presser: explains the purpose, projects the power and broadness of who the clergy represent
    b) Names examples of election interference and the launch of organizing efforts
    c) Introduces other speakers
    d) Fields questions
2) **3-4 Other Clergy Speakers (5 total speakers max, 90 seconds max per speaker, prioritize power and demonstration of broad support in choosing speakers)**
    a) The speakers line-up should be chosen based on power and projecting broad-based support:
        i) The speaker line up should represent multiple major faith traditions in your area
        ii) There should be a clergy speaker from an urban, a suburban and a more rural context, and you should prioritize a speaker line up that reflects the racial diversity of your context as much as possible.
        iii) You should prioritize who represents the most people in choosing which speaker from each faith community/ region.

More Detailed Guide for Speaker Remarks

Chair: Opens and Frames for The Press Conference, Fields Questions at The End

a) Introduces yourself (role in faith community and region)
b) Explains the purpose of the press conference and projects the power of the clergy and faith communities you collectively represent
    i) Ex.” My clergy colleagues are here today representing more than 300 clergy from across many faith traditions: Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist traditions from Albert Lea to Duluth and across the Twin Cities Metro to decry the federal government’s attempts to interfere with election administration and our most foundational right- the right to vote and freely elect our leaders.”
c) Shares concrete and verifiable examples of attempts to interfere in elections or election administration (especially local examples)
    i) Examples of attempts at interference could include the following:

(1) March 31st Executive Order directing USPS to limit who has access to mail in ballots and directing DHS and DOJ to secure voter rolls to determine voter eligibility (against the law since all elections are administered at the state level)
(2) Baseless claims of stolen elections or cheating
(3) Attempts to limit voter access or to intimidate voters by sending ICE to polling places
(4) Intimidating local officials to share voting records even in violation of state law.

d) Introduces the speakers that follow
b) Fields questions from the press.
    i) You do not have to directly answer every question. You can "answer the question you wish was asked" and bring it back to why we are there and what we hope to accomplish. You also can say I don't know.

3-4 Other Clergy Speakers to Follow:

These speakers should share something about their concerns about election interference as clergy and that we are calling on our elected officials and election administrators to follow state laws and protect our elections from federal interference. Your remarks should be written to boldly affirm voting rights and to resonate with as many people as possible. See more extensive speaker notes below. There are many different possible "angles" to emphasize. Pick one. Some examples below:

a) Fear of members' around voter access: concerns about mail-in voting being impacted, immigrant citizen members being afraid about reports of ICE at polling places, concerns about attempts to interfere with counting votes or baseless claims of fraud.
b) What my faith values have to do with my belief in the right to vote: human dignity and equality embodied through our right to vote.
c) Role of faith leaders in fighting for voting rights throughout our country's history- leaders from your tradition and how and why you are joining that effort
d) Concern about concrete interference efforts: Ex. "We are opposed to patterns of action that prevent eligible voters from voting and that dilute voter's power to choose their elected leaders are opposed to the core values of our faith traditions. Complicated registration rules, fewer voting options, threats to deploy ICE to polling places, requests that states turn over voter rolls despite privacy and security concerns, and aggressive gerrymandering of maps all offend our core faith values as well as core democracy values. These efforts limit access to the ballot box and intimidate eligible voters, especially eligible voters of color. This makes us less free and gives us less power as voters to choose our leaders."

Media Advisory Template

A media advisory informs the press that you are holding a press conference, answers the questions of what, who, when, and why, and invites them to attend.

Contact Trevor Cochlin at tcochlin@isaiahmn.org or Liam McMahon at liam@faithinusleading.org for help writing your media advisory.

*** MEDIA ADVISORY for [Day of Week], [Date] ***

FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

Contact: [Name, Phone Number and/or Email]

[Headline]

[Subheadline, if necessary]

[City], [State Abbr.] – Here, you provide a quick, summarizing paragraph or two about what is happening and why. Keep this part incredibly short. Target having no more than five sentences. We don't want to overexplain our press conference. Instead, we want to pique reporters' interests so that they show up to hear more. We can save a more thorough explanation and account of our press conference for a press release afterward. Here's an example of a media advisory in this format.

WHO: [give an overview of the people who will be present]

WHAT: [briefly state what the event is]

WHEN: [date and time]

WHERE: [location, full address, and any helpful details for reporters to locate exactly where you will be]

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(the ### indicates the end of the media advisory)

Press Release Template

A press release shares a full story with members of the press who might want to cover the event. Unlike a media advisory, it is a longer, more thoroughly written account of your press event.

Contact Trevor Cochlin at tcochlin@isaiahmn.org or Liam McMahon at liam@faithinusleading.org for help writing your press release.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name, Phone Number and/or Email]

[Headline]

[Subheadline, if necessary]

[City], [State Abbr.] – [Date] – The opening paragraph answers: Who? What? When? Where? Why? Keep it to 2-3 sentences. This is the most important paragraph. If a journalist reads nothing else, they should understand the full story just from this paragraph. Here's an example press release in a similar format.

In the second paragraph you can go into more detail and share more background. Zoom out to share broader context of threats to our democracy. Give concrete examples of how attacks to voting rights are unfolding in your state. Share the role that clergy have played in protecting pro-democracy and civil rights in our country's history.

Next, you can share a short quote (aim for 2-3 sentences maximum) from each of the speakers, sharing what faith institution and city the represent. This will require collecting manuscript speeches or referring to any recorded videos of the press conference.

Optional: End with any additional details not already stated above, next steps from your group that reporters would be interested to know about, and offer any details of media availability of the speakers to be interviewed further by reporters upon request.

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(the ### indicates the end of the press release)